

URGENT ACTION

CHINESE RIGHTS DEFENDER FACES 15 YEARS IN JAIL

Zhen Jianghua reportedly stood trial over the charge of “inciting subversion of state power” on 10 August. With no access to family and lawyers of his choice, the human rights defender is at risk of torture and unfair trial.

Zhen Jianghua was tried on the charge of “inciting subversion of state power” in Zhuhai City Intermediate People's Court on 10 August, according to a statement on the Supreme People's Procuratorate Case Information Disclosure Website posted (and later removed) on 23 August. The court is supposed to issue a decision no later than three months after the trial but can get extensions with approval from the Supreme People's Court. If convicted, Zhen Jianghua could face up to 15 years behind bars.

The lawyers originally appointed by Zhen Jianghua were told by police in April that Zhen had dismissed them. Amnesty International learnt that a lawyer put forward by the authorities met with Zhen in mid-2018, but Zhen refused to appoint him as his lawyer. The state-appointed lawyer told Zhen's family that his trial would possibly start at the end of July or the beginning of August.

Zhen Jianghua is a human rights defender with over 10 years' experience working for marginalized communities in China and has been detained several times as a result of his activism. Initially put under criminal detention on suspicion of “inciting subversion of state power” on 2 September 2017, Zhen Jianghua was moved, less than four weeks later, into “residential surveillance in a designated location” – a measure that enables police to hold individuals for up to six months outside the formal detention system in what can amount to secret incommunicado detention. On 29 March 2018, he was formally arrested on the charge of “inciting subversion of state power”. He is currently detained in Zhuhai City No.2 Detention Centre. Since his arrest, and throughout his detention, Zhen Jianghua has not been allowed access to the lawyers of his choice, raising further concerns that he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Please write immediately in English, Chinese or your own language:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Zhen Jianghua and drop all charges as he is a prisoner of conscience who has been detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression
- Ensure that, pending his release, Zhen Jianghua is protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in detention and that he is allowed, without delay, effective access to lawyers of his choice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 OCTOBER 2018 TO:

Procurator

Huang Weiyu
Zhuhai City People's Procuratorate
166 Xianghua Lu
Xiangzhou Qu
Zhihai Shi
Guangdongsheng 519000

Salutation: Dear Director

Director

Li Chunsheng
Guangdong Provincial Department of
Public Security
97 Huanghai Lu
Guangzhou Shi
Guangdong Sheng 510050
People's Republic of China

Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

Minister of Public Security
Zhao Kezhi Buzhang
Ministry of Public Security
14 Dongchangan Jie
Dongchengqu Beijing Shi 100741
People's Republic of China
Tel: +86 10 66262114 (Chinese Only)
Email: gabzfwz@mps.gov.cn

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR LIU XIAOMING, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 49-51 Portland Place W1B 1JL, 020 7299 4049, press_uk@mfa.gov.cn

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 235/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/asa17/8157/2018

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zhen Jianghua serves as executive director for Human Rights Campaign in China, a virtual organization that campaigns for human rights defenders at risk and helps individuals to document and publicize the human rights violations they have experienced. Zhen Jianghua is also the executive editor and founder of ATGFW.ORG, a website that advocates against Internet censorship and teaches people how to access information by circumventing China's system of online surveillance and censorship, known colloquially as the "Great Firewall". In addition, Zhen has also led an education project on HIV/AIDS prevention in Zhuhai city.

On 3 September 2016, Zhen Jianghua travelled to Wukan village, Guangdong province, in support of the protest against illegal land grabbing by the local government. As he was about to leave Wukan, he was detained and questioned by police for more than 24 hours on suspicion of inciting a protest in Wukan village. Upon his release on 7 September, Zhen Jianghua published an online public statement about his detention. That same night, he was detained for interrogation overnight on suspicion of "inciting participation in illegal rallies, marches and demonstrations".

Over the years, China has made further efforts to reinforce its already oppressive system of internet censorship. Thousands of websites and social media services are forced to censor content, while some platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are blocked. China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology announced in January 2017 that the government had launched a 14-month campaign to crack down on "unauthorized" Internet platforms. Prior government approval is required for offering VPN services, which can be used to evade China's internet censorship. According to local media reports, several people were prosecuted in 2017 for supplying and selling VPN products and services.

In addition, a number of citizen journalists and directors of local news outlets that publicize articles and information about human rights incidents in China have been detained and imprisoned. Six journalists from Sichuan-based website "64 Tianwang" (64tianwang.org) were detained for covering protests in relation to the G20 Summit in Hangzhou in September 2016 while its founder, Huang Qi, has been detained since November 2016, and formally arrested for "leaking state secrets" in December 2016. The founder and director of Hubei-based human rights website "Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch" (www.msguancha.com), Liu Feiyue, was formally arrested for "inciting subversion of state power" in December 2016. Lu Yuyu and his girlfriend Li Tingyu, who managed a blog (wickedonna.blogspot.com) and a Twitter account (@wickedonnaa) that compiled and released data on strikes, protests and rural unrest in China, were both criminally detained on 15 June 2016 on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". Li Tingyu was released on bail after a court trial on 10 April 2017 while Lu Yuyu was sentenced to four years imprisonment for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble."

"Residential surveillance in a designated location" is a measure that, under certain circumstances, enables criminal investigators to hold individuals for up to six months outside the formal detention system in what can amount to a form of secret incommunicado detention. When held without access to legal counsel of their choice, their families or others, suspects placed under this form of "residential surveillance" are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. This form of detention has been used to curb the activities of human rights defenders, including lawyers, activists and religious practitioners. Activists and human rights defenders continue to be systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest and detention.

Name: Zhen Jianghua
Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 235/17 Index: ASA 17/9049/2018 Issue Date: 6 September 2018